INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INFORMATIVE & FUTURISTIC RESEARCH (IJIFR)
ISSN: 2347-1697
VOLUME 13||ISSUE 2|| OCTOBER 2025
An Open Access, Peer Reviewed , Globally Indexed & Refereed International Research Journal
Estd Year: 2013 || Website: www.ijifr.org || Email: editors@ijifr.org
Impact Factor=8.057, Index Corpenicus Value:6.62
Published By: Pioneering Journal Publishers

ATTITUDE OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION TOWARDS ECO-FRIENDLY HANDICRAFTS: A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH

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ABSTRACT: ***The Handicraft industry is essential for safeguarding cultural heritage, sustaining rural livelihoods, and promoting economic development. In recent times handicrafts have taken as sustainable products for global environment protection and combine with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This study finds out the customer attitudes and satisfaction with eco-friendly handicrafts and their role in enhancing sustainable consumption and production. Primary and secondary data were both examined to know customers' perceptions of quality, price, design and environmental value. The findings point to satisfactory customer attitudes, significantly influence level of satisfaction and customer behaviour. The increased demand for eco-friendly handicrafts is an opportunity for artisans and policymakers to increase sustainable market growth. This study concludes that awareness, upholding product quality, and using innovative marketing strategies are key factors that can enable the improvement of customer satisfaction and the long-term sustainability of the handicraft sector.***

KEYWORDS: ***Handicraft Industry, Sustainable development, Customer Attitude, Eco-Friendly***

PAPER CITATION:
Simi, S. & Manjula, K.G. (2025) *: "Attitude of customer satisfaction towards eco-friendly handicrafts: a sustainable approach", International Journal of Informative & Futuristic Research (IJIFR), Vol.(13) (2), October 2025, pp. 186 – 194*
DOI: ***https://doi.org/10.64672/IJIFR/25.10.13.02.003***
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1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of sustainability rests on the principle that Earth's resources are finite and most be conserved for the well-being of future generations. Indian handicrafts serve as a strong example of eco-friendly practices, as they rely on sustainable materials and traditional techniques that create minimal environmental impact. Commonly used materials include bamboo, jute, clay, terracotta, natural fibres such as grass and khadi, coconut shells, plant-based dyes, and recycled paper in papier-mâché art. With the growing recognition of sustainability, natural products are increasingly celebrated for blending India's rich cultural heritage with environmentally conscious practices, thereby contributing to ecological well-being. Sustainability in art handicraft refers to creating artefacts using eco-friendly materials and processes that do not harm the environment. It emphasizes the responsible use of resources, adoption of ethical practices, and minimization of waste. The concept extends across four key dimensions— environmental, social, economic, and cultural sustainability. Environmental sustainability highlights the use of biodegradable materials and practices that generate little to no waste. Social sustainability ensures fair labour practices, where artisans are treated with dignity, paid fairly, and their cultural identity is respected and promoted. Economic sustainability involves building financially viable systems that secure the long-term growth and stability of the craft sector. Cultural sustainability focuses on preserving and promoting traditional heritage, while ensuring that art remains both economically and environmentally sound.

The handicraft sector is a significant source of income for many countries (Ramjaun et al., 2024). In certain developing nations, there's a concerted effort to cultivate the handicraft sector to cater to the tourism market. Handicrafts represent the culture, tradition, and creativity of artisans, showcasing their skills, knowledge, and passion. Yet, the Indian handicraft sector is not without challenges. In today's era of globalization and shifting consumer preferences, industrialization, mechanization, and mass production have diminished the demand and value of handmade goods. At the same time, consumers are increasingly conscious about quality, design, innovation, and sustainability in their purchases. Artisans often struggle to keep pace with competition, changing markets, technological advancements, and limited access to resources and institutional support. Hence, it becomes crucial to explore the factors that shape consumer acceptance of innovation in handicraft products and identify ways to strengthen the competitiveness and appeal of the Indian handicraft industry. It is important to understand the factors that influence the consumer acceptance of innovation in handicraft products and how to enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of the Indian handicraft industry

The handicraft industry is a vibrant and diverse sector that holds immense significance for both the economy and culture of nations worldwide. In place of a vital part of the creative economy, it not only preserves traditional skills, heritage, and local identities but also continuously adapts to evolving global trends. The Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) (Ministry of Textiles) defines handicrafts as hand-made products or products developed from simple tools that are more artistic and reflect traditional values. These products generally feature utilitarian aesthetics rooted in traditions, creativity, and function, along with socially or religiously symbolic attributes (Majeed, 2018). The handicrafts of every region and country are thus a direct reflection of their corresponding lifestyle, needs, culture, materials, and traditions. Being thoroughly local, handicrafts native to a particular region and community symbolise sustainability, circularity, and low ecological footprint throughout their lifecycle.

2. SUSTAINABLE LIVING THROUGH CRAFT PRACTICES

Our lifestyle and our choices have a huge impact on the planet. It affects everything starting from the economy to the environment. Policies, planning, meetings, and conferences around sustainable development encourage and push society to think responsibly about the environment and how our activities can put the community at risk. In this regard quality of life must be improved by

incorporating sustainable lifestyles. It is both the collective and individual choice that ensures positive implementation of the policies on sustainable living. As per the COP21 Paris Agreement, patterns of consumption and production processes must be sustainable enough to fight against climate change (UNEP, 2016). This approach provides a sustainable direction for the lifestyle or garment industry and gives way to the circular economy. In the circular economy, clothes, textiles, and Fibers are kept or stored in such a manner that they can be reused and never end up as waste. With a specific emphasis on innovation towards a sustainable system, a new textile circular economy presents an opportunity to deliver substantially better societal and environmental as well as economic outcomes. Better social outcomes for workers will involve more focus on their universal human rights (Rouch, 2021).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of sustainability has been a central focus in both policy and academic discourse since the publication of the Brundtland Report (1987). This report defines sustainable development as development that 'meets' the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This definition underscores the imperative of balancing human development with preserving environmental integrity, ensuring that economic and social progress can be sustained over time.

Building on this foundational concept, the University of Alberta offers a more detailed definition of sustainability as "the practice of surviving within the boundaries of available physical, natural, and social resources in manners that allow the living ecosystems in which human beings are rooted to thrive in perpetuity" This definition highlights the necessity of integrating environmental stewardship, economic resilience, and social well-being into sustainability practices.

(i) Sustainable Development Theory

The foundation of the sustainable approach in handicrafts is rooted in the Brundtland Report (1987), which defines sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987). Applied to handicrafts, this theory emphasizes the use of eco-friendly raw materials, conservation of traditional knowledge, and the creation of income opportunities for artisans.

(ii) Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Framework

Elkington's (1997) TBL approach highlights three dimensions of sustainability:

- People (social sustainability): Improving artisans' livelihoods, ensuring fair wages, and empowering women.
- Planet (environmental sustainability): Using renewable, biodegradable, and local resources to minimize ecological impact.
- Profit (economic sustainability): Creating competitive products, accessing fair trade markets, and ensuring artisans' financial stability.

(iii) Cultural Sustainability Theory

Handicrafts are carriers of cultural identity and heritage. According to Throsby (1999), cultural sustainability involves maintaining traditions, indigenous knowledge, and intangible cultural assets while adapting them to modern markets. Sustainable handicraft production ensures the preservation of cultural heritage alongside economic growth.

(iv) Empowerment and Livelihood Framework

Chambers & Conway (1992) proposed the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), which focuses on building resilience, reducing vulnerability, and enhancing capabilities of rural communities. Within handicrafts, this theory underlines how skill development, institutional support, and collective organizations (like SHGs and cooperatives) empower artisans, especially women, to secure sustainable livelihoods.

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Growing environmental concerns and the growing need for sustainable consumption have influenced customers to shift towards eco-friendly products. Handicrafts made from natural fibres and other sustainable materials are gaining importance as substitutes to synthetic, mass- produced goods. But, despite their eco-friendly nature, these products often face challenges such as limited consumer awareness, price, and competition from machine made items. Lack of raw materials, unavailability of fund and lack of marketing support. Although customer satisfaction and positive attitudes towards eco-friendly handicrafts are essential for their wider acceptance and sustainable growth, here remains a gap in understanding how aware customers are about these products, what factors initiative their selection, and how demographic factors form their attitudes (Singh & Sharma, 2021; Rani, 2020). This study titled "Attitude of Customer Satisfaction towards Eco-friendly Handicrafts" A Sustainable Approach" help in identifying opportunities to enhance customer acceptance and by promoting both environmental sustainability and the livelihood safety of artisans.

5. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- Singh & Sharma (2021) conducted a study on consumer awareness and attitudes towards sustainable handicrafts in India. The research highlighted that eco-consciousness, product quality, and design aesthetics significantly influenced customer preferences. Using survey analysis, the authors revealed that demographic factors such as education and income played a major role in shaping awareness and purchase behaviour, indicating that customer satisfaction with eco-friendly handicrafts is strongly linked with perceived environmental benefits.
- Rani (2020) investigated consumer preferences towards eco-friendly handicrafts with a focus on purchase intention and satisfaction. The study found that cultural value, affordability, and product durability were the major drivers for selection. The analysis suggested that although awareness levels were improving, lack of effective marketing and limited accessibility reduced overall customer satisfaction.
- Kumar & Devi (2021) examined sustainable handicrafts from the perspective of artisan livelihood and consumer demand. The research emphasized that authenticity, branding, and eco-certification enhanced trust and satisfaction among consumers. The findings underlined that customer attitudes are not only shaped by environmental consciousness but also by the perception of supporting local artisans and traditional culture.
- Thomas & Joseph (2019) carried out a study in Kerala on eco-friendly product adoption, including handicrafts, using a descriptive research approach. The study revealed that awareness campaigns and eco-labelling significantly improved customer confidence and satisfaction levels. It concluded that aligning product marketing with sustainability narratives positively influenced customer attitudes and repeat purchase behavior

6. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

(i) To have an overview of the awareness level of customers towards Eco=friendly handicrafts

(ii) To study the various factors responsible for the selection of E-co-friendly handicrafts by customers

(iii) To analyse the impact of various demographic factors on customers attitude towards Eci-Friendly Handicrafts

7. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

Following hypotheses have taken for studying the customer's attitude towards Eco-friendly handicrafts.

(i) There is no relationship between age and attitude towards Eco- Friendly handicrafts
(ii) There is no relationship between gender and attitude towards Eco-friendly handicrafts
(iii) There is no relationship between income and attitude towards Eco- Friendly handicrafts
(iv) There is no relationship between occupation and attitude towards Eco- Friendly handicrafts

8. RESEARCH GAP

Most studies focus on production challenges of artisans, but less study on consumer attitudes and satisfaction toward eco-friendly handicrafts. Research focusing positively on customer satisfaction with eco-friendly handicrafts remains limited. There is a lack of comprehensive studies in Kerala that link demographic variables, such as age, education, income, and locality with customer attitudes and satisfaction levels toward eco-friendly handicrafts. whereas factors such as price, availability, and eco- consciousness have been explored, little attention has been given to how these factors explain into overall customer satisfaction in the situation of eco-friendly handicrafts. The research highlights the gap between handicraft challenges and customer attitude and satisfaction towards Eco- Friendly handicraft items, ultimately contributing to the inclusive and sustainable growth of the handicraft industry.

9. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive research design for analysing the attitudes of customers towards environment- friendly handicrafts. Primary Data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed among 200 customers in sample urban and rural areas from the southern Districts ((Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha) in Kerala. Due to time constraints and limited resources, it can be decided to distribute the questionnaire in electronic form rather than by post. All the data required for this analytical study has been obtained mainly from primary sources. The questionnaire contained on demographic variables as well as indicators of product, price, design, cultural and perception of eco- friendliness. The data collected were analysed with statistics to identify frequency distributions and mean scores, which were used to rank the influencing factors of customer satisfaction. Chi-square tests were used to test relation between demographic factors (age, gender and occupation) and attitude toward environmental products. A five-point Likert Scale was employed for evaluating the level of agreement with a set of statements about eco- friendly handicrafts.

10. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, targeted population belongs to southern districts of Kerala state and considering an individual customer as a sampling unit. Random Sampling Method has been used for collecting the sample. For analysing the collected data effectively and to draw sound conclusions, statistical techniques namely Chi-square test for testing of hypothesis and analysing various factors influence for the selection of handicraft by the customer's, ranking method was done on the basis of mean scores and scoring was done on the basis of five-point scale.

H1o: *There is no relation between age and attitude towards Eco-friendly handicraft products*

Table 1: Age and Attitude towards Eco-Friendly Handicrafts

Attitude level				
Age	positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
Below 30	50	20	10	80

31-40	30	10	10	50
41-50	25	10	5	40
Above 50	20	0	10	30
Total	125	40	35	200

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: The Table 1 shows that the relation between age and attitude towards eco-friendly handicraft products. The calculated chi-square value (3.95) is less than the table value (12.592) at 0.05 significance level with 6 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted, there is no significant relation between age and attitude towards handicraft products.

H20 : *There is no relationship between gender and attitude towards Eco-friendly handicrafts*

Table 2: Gender and attitude towards Eco-Friendly Handicrafts

Gender	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
Male	62	15	23	100
Female	58	20	22	100
Total	120	35	45	200

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: Table 2 explains the relationship between gender and attitude towards Eco-froendly handicrafts of chi- square at 0.05 level of significance with degrees of freedom 2 is 5.99 and calculated value is 0.97. As calculated value is less than table value, we accept null hypothesis and hence it is no relationship between gender and attitude towards Eco-friendly handicrafts. About 62 male respondent and 58 female respondents have positive attitude towards Eco- friendly handicrafts.

H30: *There is no relation between income attitudes towards Eco-Friendly handicraft products*

Table 3: Income and attitude towards Eco-Friendly Handicrafts

Attitude Level				
Income category	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
Less than 25000	50	35	20	105
25001-50000	30	30	20	80
Above 50000	15	10	10	35
Toal	95	65	40	200

Source: Primary Data nterpretation

Interpretation: The analysis from the Table 3, explains there is no significant relationship between income and overall attitude towards eco-friendly handicraft products. This indicates that customers from all income groups earning less than Rs. 25000, Rs. 25001-50000, or above Rs. 50000 show a positive attitude toward eco-friendly handicrafts. Income does not strongly influence eco-conscious preferences, suggesting that environmental awareness and appreciation of sustainable handicrafts are widespread among customers. The calculated F-value (1.42) is less than the table F-value (3.00) at the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis (H20)

H40: *There is no relation between occupation and attitude towards Eco-friendly handicrafts*

Table 4: Occupation and attitude towards Eco-friendly Handicrafts

Attitude level				
Occupation	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
Direct employment	75	10	5	90
Indirect Employment	30	8	2	40
Self Employed	55	12	3	70
Total	160	30	10	200

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: From the Table 4, the calculated chi-square value was 2.20 with 4 degrees of freedom, which is lower than the critical value of 9.49 at the 5% significance level. The corresponding p-value is 0.70 is much higher than 0.05, shows that the association is not significant. The customer's occupation does not have any influence on whether they express positive, neutral and negative attitudes towards eco-friendly handicrafts.

In this study, customer choice of handicraft products is influenced by a multitude of interconnected factors extending beyond price. Functionality, authenticity, cultural value and social influence also play a role in purchase decision. To identify the influential factors, Likert scale 1-5 were used for the ranking. Each rank was then assigned for data analysis.

Points	5	4	3	2	1
Factors	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Table 5: Various factors for the selection of handicrafts

Factors	SA (1)	A (2)	N (3)	DA (4)	SDA (5)	TOTAL RESPONSES	MEAN SCORE
Quality & Durability	5	10	30	80	75	200	4.25
Design & Aesthetics	8	12	40	70	70	200	4.05
Functionality	10	15	50	70	55	200	3.8
Authenticity	12	18	50	60	60	200	3.8
Price	6	15	40	80	59	200	4.05
Awareness of Eco-Friendliness	5	12	45	60	68	200	4.05
Social Influence	15	20	50	60	55	200	3.65
Environmental Concern	4	8	40	70	78	200	4.3
Marketing and promotion	20	25	60	50	45	200	3.35

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: The overall analysis from the table 5 reveals the analysis of factors influencing the selection of handicraft products reveals that environmental concern (mean- 4.30) is the most influential determinant, indicating that customers strongly value eco-friendly practices in their purchasing decisions. This is followed by quality and durability (4.25), highlighting the reference for products that are long-lasting, design and aesthetics, price and awareness of eco-friendliness also scored highly (means 4.05), reflecting the importance of visual appeal, cost considerations and consumer consciousness about sustainability. Factors such as functionality, utility and authenticity, and cultural value recorded moderate influence (means= 3.80), they are not the top priorities. Social influence (3.65), marketing and promotion (3.35) are less effective in shaping consumer choice compared to intrinsic product qualities and environmental considerations.

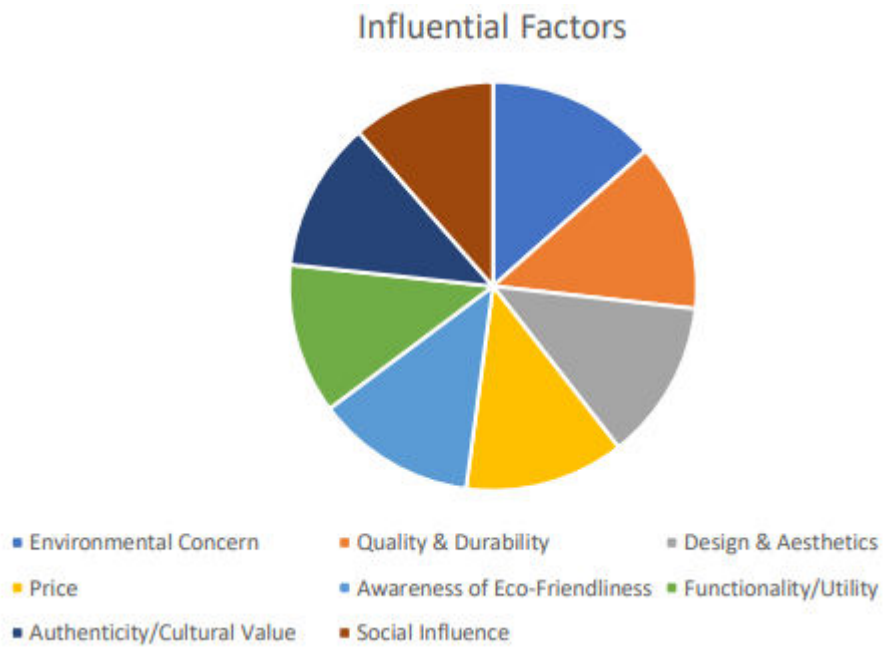

Figure 1: Influential Factors

11. SUGGEESTIONS

- Socia media, exhibitions and eco-fairs can be used to highlight the environmental and cultural value of eco-friendly handicrafts
- Improve distribution channels, so that eco-friendly handicrafts are easily available in urban and rural areas
- Maintain durability, design, and usability standards to ensure long term customer satisfaction
- Combination of traditional craftsmanship with modern designs to demand younger customers while preserving cultural heritage
- Offer fair and reasonable price strategies to facilitate eco-friendly handicrafts remain competitive with mass produced goods
- Provide subsidies, training programs and financial aid to artisans for sustainable production practices
- Create linkages with eco-tourism and sustainable lifestyle markets to expand opportunities
- Collect regular feedback to understand evolving customer expectations

12. CONCLUSION

Indian handicraft is more than art; it is a living example of sustainability, community, and resourcefulness. It is rooted in harmony with nature, offering a powerful model for an eco-friendly way of life. Supporting sustainable practices is a commitment to cultural preservation, conscious consumption and artisan empowerment. Sustainable materials such as Bamboo, Jute, Coconut shell, Papier-mâché, and Sabai grass help in making biodegradable products. The study of customers shows a favorable attitude and satisfaction towards eco-friendly handicrafts, recognizing them as sustainable and valuable alternatives to conventional products. The findings further emphasize that eco-friendly handicrafts are gaining acceptance as sustainable alternatives in consumer markets. So, initiatives to promote eco-friendly handicrafts can target a broad customer base without the need to focus on specific demographic categories. Strengthening awareness

campaigns, improving product accessibility, and ensuring quality and affordability will enhance customer satisfaction and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the handicraft sector. The positive perception is not restricted to any particular demographic group, indicating that environmental awareness and appreciation for traditional, eco-friendly crafts are widely shared. This reflects a growing consumer shift towards sustainability, where customer satisfaction is influenced more by the eco-friendly and cultural essence of handicrafts than by age, income, or occupation. From now, eco-friendly handicrafts hold strong potential in contributing to sustainable consumption patterns and promoting green entrepreneurship.

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